

# THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

January 1983

Happy 1983, Bird Brains. We are off and flying at a hectic pace already and what has fledged as an exciting bird year holds promise for even better things to come. Let's all give a winging salute to our new officers for 1983--- Thom Blair - President, Bob Cross - Vice President for Programs, Bill Williams - Vice President for Newsletter, Alice Springle - Secretary, Leigh Jones - Treasurer and Fred Blystone and Carolyn Lowe are our Board Members at large. We must also serve a generous round of congratulations and thanks to our outgoing President, Tom Armour, and to Ruth Beck for her excellent performance under the rigors of program chairman. Jobs well done were also accomplished by Cynthia Long as Secretary and Cindy Fletcher and Brian Taber as Board Members. Sa--Lute!

Last year may very well have proven to be our best yet. Topped by our highly effective and profitable Bird Seed Sale (\$1,800 +) we continued to donate books to the Williamsburg Regional Library and to provide \$500 towards avian research for William and Mary students. Monies used in this regard went to Bob Anderson and Fenton Day for their work on oystercatchers and gulls and terns respectively. Monthly field trips of superior quality were conducted accumulating a species list of well over 200. We manned very successful bluebird and purple martin nesting trails both of which have their own financial backing now (\$300 each) and are in the process of expanding. Spring and Christmas bird counts were the highlights of their respective seasons and put lots of members to work on a fun project. Our club members continued to be among the state's leading field researchers through various efforts led by Mitchell Byrd's ongoing efforts to reestablish peregrine falcons to the Old Dominion and upgrade the state's bald eagle population. Ruth monitored red-cockaded woodpeckers (an endangered species) and was involved to locating all of the great blue heron nesting areas in Virginia. Additionally, we held an incredibly successful hawk watch this fall at Kiptopeke and during the summer assisted the Nature Conservancy in surveying the colonial waterbirds on the Eastern Shore Barrier Islands. Three of our group are members of the VSO Executive Board (Ruth, Bill Williams, Rich Goll). Rich is in charge of the Virginia Rare Bird Alert system, while yours truly is chairman of the VSO Nominating Committee. Rich and Cindy nailed down Virginia's first Barrow's goldeneye record, and Ruth has been put in charge of organizing the VSO's annual winter field trip to the Outer Banks. Several new birds were added to our local list including Henslow's sparrow and brown pelican. Whew!! What an effort. We even have our own club patch now!

In order to make 1983 fly we need continued support of a strong membership. Dues renewal notices are enclosed with the newsletter. Save 20 cents and bring your dues to Leigh at our January 19 meeting. Not only will she accept dues money but she'd probably let you purchase one of our beautiful club patches for \$1.50. Remember, anyone paying patrons dues (\$25. or more) will receive a patch free. The patch was designed by our own Rich Goll for which he was awarded a copy of Bent's Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers.

Our first meeting for this new year will take place Wednesday, January 19 at 7:30 p.m. in room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary. Bob Cross has been hard at work preparing for the program season so come on out and see what he's got in store for us.

Fred Blystone doesn't particularly want to have his home regarded as a seedy establishment. You can help him overcome a problem. He's got alot of 25 pound bags of sunflower seed he would gladly get rid of for \$8.25 each. Not only that, he's recently mailed out a winter order form for Bird Seed Sale. Give him a call 229-4346 if you want seed or more especially can help out with the Bird Seed Savings Day.

Carolyn Lowe has agreed to head up our Field Trip Committee. This job invariably becomes one of boom or bust. The booms come when club members show up for trips, the busts come (all too often) when they don't. This month Tom Armour will lead a crew to Hog Island Waterfowl Management Area over in Surry County. In order to try to generate more participation the group will convene at 8:00 a.m. instead of our usual 7:00 a.m. The trip will be held Saturday, January 22 and everyone is asked to meet at the parking lot to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center as you enter off the Colonial Parkway. Bring warm clothes, boots, munchies and some spare change to help out with the ferry toll. The focus of the trip will be waterfowl of all kinds including pintails, gadwall, green-winged teal, Canada and snow geese, mallards, ring-necked ducks and hopefully a bald eagle or two.

As the year gets underway our Bluebird Committee and our Purple Martin Committee will be looking for volunteers to assist them. The Bluebird Committee headed by Leigh Jones (229-2476) needs folks with carpentry skills and equipment to build new houses and needs willing individuals to monitor our existing trails at Carter's Grove, York River State Park and the Williamsburg Country Club. Last year our boxes produced over 50 young bluebirds. Lets double that this year.

Bob Cross along with Sam Hart work on the purple martins. Bob simply needs willing hands to help with box cleaning and summer banding of young. Here again the potential is there for expansion of the project, one that is very noticeable to the public.

York River State Park was adopted by our club a year ago. We've been asked to lead bird walks there this year, one of which involves a canoe trip. If you can lend a hand here let Thom Blair know soon.

The idea of a club picnic has been mentioned. Obviously such an affair would need much advanced planning and someone to direct the event. Thom Blair would love to hear a pep from some volunteers.

Now that the club is reaching some financial stability Leigh Jones has been directed to come up with an annual budget. Included in this will be our operating committees, newsletter mailings, programs for monthly meetings, scholarship fund, and books for the regional library. We would also like to lend financial assistance to some conservation groups. For this we need your input and suggestions. Be prepared to give your choice at the January 19 meeting.

Also, are there additional ways we could put our money back in to the community? Think about it.

Our December 19 Christmas Bird Count started out as a magnificent day. By mid-afternoon, however, we were caught between a mixture of rain and snow and no birds. Our final tally was our lowest since the count began in 1977. That year it rained all day and we managed 99 species. This year we found only 97 species. The top bird was a well described merlin found by Teta Kain at Camp Peary. Obvious misses included brown-headed cowbird (can you believe it), both species of scaup, clapper rail, Forster's tern and evening grosbeak and pine siskin (they just aren't here this year). In addition to the merlin other goodies were two common mergansers at Hog Island, several bald eagles, four phoebes and three house wrens. A super thanks to everyone who assisted in the count. We had several feeder watches that provided great birds (fox sparrow for instance) and a number of people gave part of the day to find us a bird or two. Great job.

The Hampton Roads Count on December 18 tallied 113 species including a peregrine falcon, short-eared owl, possible white-eyed vereo and five snow geese.



Strong northeast winds made birding very difficult and flooded all the marshes.

The new 1983 was barely a day old when the rare bird phones began to jingle. From Fishersville, between Waynesboro and Staunton, came reports of a snowy owl. On the subsequent days this magnificent northern visitor (an adult female) was seen by a number of our people including Rich Goll, Cindy Fletcher, Leigh Jones and Tom Armour. People from every corner of the state were on hand Sunday January 2 to see the bird fly about and to photograph it as it perched cooperatively on a telephone pole. Two Thayer's gulls were reported on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, one an adult, one an immature having been found there during Christmas counts. Efforts to relocate them have proved unsuccessful. However, a trip to the tunnel islands have not been without benefit. A Saturday January 8 trip produced king and common eider, the latter being a beautiful first year male, great cormorant, purple sandpipers, all three scoters, oldsquaw and some gannets for Brian Taber, Leigh and Tom Armour.

But the bird of the year so far has to be our very own celebrity; a young male rufous hummingbird. The young man was first seen in Thom Blair's driveway on January 4 as it fed on Mahonia flowers. Since that day its regular 7:30 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. routine has been attended by car loads of birders from all over the state who have come to see the third record individual of this species recorded in Virginia. Rufous hummers are a common species in certain areas of the west and have been showing increasing frequency on the east coast especially in Florida. Remember, last winter one or two of them spent the winter in a home in Northern Virginia. We hope our star can last through the winter. Hummingbird feeders have been set out for him but so far he's snubbed them. Where the bird spends the major part of its day is a mystery. Its appearances at the Blairs have been consistent only early and late in the day with a few scattered sitings at other mid day hours. What a neat find.

Are there any orioles around? They could not be found on the Christmas count (we led the nation 2 years ago!). The only ones noted have been at Martha Armstrong's so far. How about grosbeaks and siskins, anyone? Red-breasted nuthatches??

The January issue of Virginia Wildlife magazine has two articles in it written by Mitchell Byrd, one of which includes a photograph by Tom Armour! You ought to read them. One concerns the state's use of the non-game research funds collected through 1981's tax refund contributions (don't forget to do your part this year). The other recounts the effort to reestablish the peregrine falcon as a breeding species in Virginia.

A trip to south Texas over the holidays was most successful for Leigh Jones. Over 170 species of birds were recorded highlighted by Mexican rarities such as white-collared seedeater, Mexican crow, brown jay, hook-billed kite. Leigh notched 51 life birds while this writer added 23 species. A list of species seen is available. Texas is beyond description for birds and is highly recommended.

The brown pelicans written about last month that were supposedly seen November 30 at Yorktown were also reported on that date by Mr. & Mrs. Ed. Katz. These independent sightings firmly establish that species in our area.

On December 13 a female black-throated blue warbler was seen in Lightfoot feeding on a sycamore ball.

A white-throated sparrow banded in 1980 has shown up again at Queens Lake where it was originally netted and marked.

ASK OWL:

Owl wishes the best 1983 has to offer everyone.

WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB  
Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Patron membership	\$25. or more	( )
Family membership	7.50	( )
Regular membership	5.00	( )
Student membership	3.00	( )

429 # 3 Scotland Street

~~P.O. Box 754~~

Williamsburg, Virginia 23185